

[25th July, 2000]

RAJYA SABHA

(b) whether it is a fact that the British Government is entertaining a doubt on the ownership of the diamond; and

(c) if so, what measures are being taken by Government to ensure the *return* of the Kohinoor, which rightfully belongs to India?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (c) As per the information provided by the Ministry of External Affairs, the Culture, Media and Sports Committee of British House of Commons, which is chaired by Gerald Kaufman is presently conducting an enquiry entitled

Property: Return and Illicit Trade". The objective of the enquiry is to make recommendations with regard to issues relating to claims for return of cultural properties, which were historically removed and policies of museums on such claims including solutions other than *return*. The Committee is not, however, expected to make any recommendations on individual claims.

The Indian High Commission in London discussed the matter with Kaufman Committee.

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## WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

### Funds for Guwahati Airport

156. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an amount of Rs. 128 crores earmarked to upgrade the Guwahati Airport as a hub centre for North-East as well as International Airport envisaged in PM's new initiatives for NER 1996;

(b) if so, the amount actually disbursed and achievements made *so far*;

(c) the target set for completion of the above;

(d) the number of smaller aircrafts proposed to be purchased and stationed at Guwahati airport to connect the various towns of NER; and

(e) the date by which Guwahati Airport will be operational as regional hub and International Airport?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) No, Sir. However a sum of Rs. 70 crores has been allocated in the Ninth five Year Plan for upgradation of Guwahati airport. Airports Authority of India

(AAI) has incurred an expenditure of Rs. 31.30 crores during the first three years of this Plan, on expansion and modification of terminal building and strengthening of runway. The work of the terminal building is expected to be completed by December, 2000 and runway by December, 2001.

Airline operators are free to decide about the purchase, stationing and operation of their aircraft, subject to the Route dispersal guidelines which specify certain minimum operations to areas like the North-East.

Guwahati airport has already been declared as international airport. No foreign airline has so far requested for Guwahati airport as a point of call.

#### **Night Landing facility at Visakhapatnam Airport**

157. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether night landing facility at the Visakhapatnam airport has been introduced to bring foreign tourists; and

(b) if not by when it is likely to be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) and (b) In view of the obstruction due to surrounding hills, civil aircraft operations can not be permitted after sunset at Visakhapatnam airport.

#### **Improvement of AI's Efficiency**

158. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during the last 35 years, many airlines have used advanced technology and management methods for improving productivity of aircraft, labour and fuel and the benefits of this have been passed on to passenger by offering lower fares;

(b) whether it is a fact that strategy makes it near impossible for inefficient airlines to compete; and

(c) if so, how does AI with its poor record of efficiency and low rate of productivity, hope to compete with such airlines?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) It is a fact that aviation industry has seen advancement in technology in the last thirty five years. Air India too has taken steps to keep pace with the changes.